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TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT BOARD  
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**Draft criteria for the establishment and operation of Trade Points \***

1. Trade Points are set up as part of the Trade Efficiency initiative launched by UNCTAD VIII, to foster greater participation in international trade, in particular of small and medium-sized enterprises, giving special attention to least developed countries and other countries less advanced in the area of trade efficiency. This, as Ministers stated in the Columbus Declaration on Trade Efficiency, is a prerequisite for development. The reduction of transaction costs in international trade is another important aim of Trade Points. The combination of these two objectives will allow Trade Points to make an important contribution to economic growth and sustainable development, poverty alleviation and employment creation on a worldwide basis.

2. A Trade Point is the result of the combination of three elements, namely:

- (a) A source of trade-related information which provides actual and potential traders with data about business and market opportunities, potential clients and suppliers, trade regulations and requirements, etc.

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\* As approved by the Informal Working Group on Trade Efficiency on 16 June 1995.

- (b) A gateway to global networking. All Trade Points will be interconnected in a worldwide electronic network, and equipped with efficient telecommunication tools to link up with other global networks.
- (c) A centre for facilitating trade, where participants in foreign trade transactions (e.g. Customs, foreign trade institutes, Chambers of Commerce, freight forwarders, transport companies, banks, insurance companies, etc.) are together under a single physical roof or linked virtually.

3. Where feasible, Trade Points shall develop virtual links with participants in international trade, thus allowing them to access to Trade Point services from their own premises.

**A. Basic services**

4. When fully established, Trade Points shall provide the following services:
- (a) Advisory services on internationally agreed recommendations on trade facilitation and better business practices;
  - (b) Assistance in conducting import and export formalities;
  - (c) Information on foreign trade regulations, both local and of trading partners;
  - (d) Information on bodies that can give further assistance.
5. Trade Points, according to local conditions, shall develop their capacity to provide:
- (a) Electronic access to a wide range of market information;
  - (b) A physical or virtual "one-stop" centre for trade related services, including Customs, import and export licences procedures, transport, banking and insurance, etc.;
  - (c) Assistance in the electronic connection of traders to the above mentioned services and advice on electronic trade.

**B. Operative principles:**

6. The local economic, technological, legal, and institutional environment will be a determinant factor in the way Trade Points operate. However, compliance with the following agreed basic principles is necessary for the effectiveness of the Global Trade Point Network:

- (a) Trade Points will conduct their operations with strict respect for the highest standards of conduct, e.g. confidentiality of information, where requested, and the principle of the non-use of privileged information for personal financial gain.
- (b) Trade Points and the Global Trade Point Network will endeavour to ensure the accuracy and impartiality of the information that is made available to users or to other Trade Points. However, Trade Points and the Global Trade Point Network will not accept legal responsibility for information obtained from third parties. Users will always be informed of this policy.
- (c) Trade Points will guarantee equal treatment to all their partners and users, and they will actively avoid any monopoly or exclusive position in relation to service providers and other Trade Points.
- (d) Trade Points will respect the principle of universality, and endeavour to ensure that technical solutions for Trade Points and services available at them be of use to all types of users in all types of environments. This will require, *inter alia* special efforts in favour of least developed countries and smaller firms (including micro-enterprises) in all countries.
- (e) Solutions and systems developed by/for Trade Points will be interconnectible and interoperable. This implies respect for internationally agreed standards, in particular those promoted by the United Nations (e.g. UN-EDIFACT) and the use of standard international product classification systems and of open telecommunications systems operating under agreed international technical standards.
- (f) Trade Points have permanent freedom to select equipment and services on a non-exclusivity basis to achieve the best quality-price ratio.
- (g) Trade Points will develop a framework allowing the freest possible exchange of information among themselves.

**C. Organization**

7. (a) Trade Points are encouraged to develop close co-operative links with the relevant national trade facilitation and/or trade promotion bodies, where such bodies exist.
- (b) It is suggested that local Trade Point associations may be created for Trade Points, along the lines described in the annex.
- (c) Trade Points established in the same country are encouraged to cooperate and co-ordinate their activities as appropriate. For this purpose, they may create a national body entrusted with this co-ordination work.

Annex

LOCAL TRADE POINT ASSOCIATIONS

1. It is suggested that local Trade Point or Trade Efficiency associations may be created for Trade Points. The objectives of such associations are to facilitate international trade and to foster greater participation in international trade, in particular of small and medium-sized enterprises. The association leads in the creation of the Trade Point and provides advice and guidance thereafter.

3. The membership of the local association should consist of representatives of the main categories of managers, users, and service-providers (participants). It may include, *inter alia*, the following:

- Relevant Ministries (trade, small and medium-sized enterprises, etc.)
- Customs administration
- Chamber of Commerce, trade promotion organization, or trade facilitation committee
- Banks and, where applicable, lending institutions specializing in financing small and medium-sized enterprises and the informal sector, insurance companies, freight forwarders, etc.
- Local non-governmental organizations
- Universities
- Importers
- Exporters